Māori leader removed from New Zealand parliament after performing haka dance

By Rob Picheta, CNN

Updated 7:11 AM ET, Wed May 12, 2021

Indigenous New Zealand lawmaker Rawiri Waititi, center, performs a Māori haka in parliament on Wednesday, May 12, 2021.

(CNN) — The co-leader of New Zealand's Māori Party has been removed from parliament for the second time this year, after performing a ceremonial dance during a debate about indigenous rights.

Rawiri Waititi interjected while Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was taking questions from lawmakers on Wednesday, accusing the country's opposition party of "racist propaganda and rhetoric."

After a tense exchange with the Speaker, which resulted in his microphone being turned off, Waititi began the traditional Māori haka and was asked to leave.

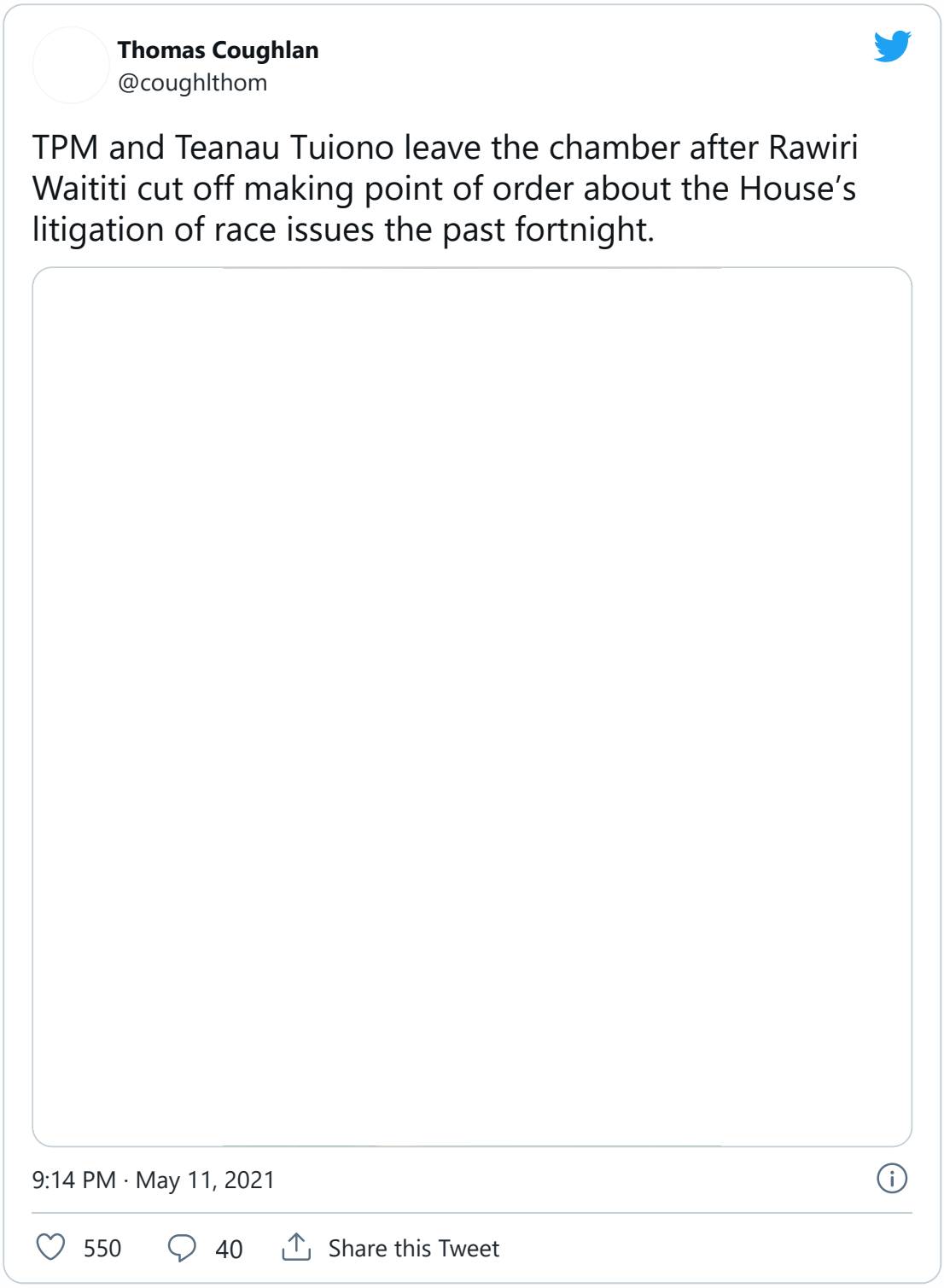
The haka, a ceremonial war dance performed before events including New Zealand rugby matches, is intended as a challenge to opponents and a rallying cry before heading into battle.

The interruption came while Judith Collins, the leader of the right-wing opposition New Zealand National Party, was putting questions to Ardern on indigenous sovereignty.

Collins' party has been critical of Ardern over the issue and has opposed the recently announced Māori Health Authority -- which Ardern's government created to redress inequalities in the nation's healthcare service -- according to CNN affiliate RNZ.

lawmaker ejected for refusing to wear one

leave after refusing to wear a necktie. The politician argued the requirement suppressed indigenous culture, and parliament subsequently dropped the rule.


Thomas Coughlan
@coughlthom
TPM and Teanau Tuiono leave the chamber after Rawiri Waititi cut off making point of order about the House's litigation of race issues the past fortnight.
9:14 PM · May 11, 2021
550
40
Share this Tweet

"Over the past two weeks, there has been racist propaganda and rhetoric towards tangata whenua," Waititi said during his first point of order on Wednesday, using a Māori term that refers to New Zealand's indigenous population. "That not only is insulting, but diminishes the manner of this House."

The Speaker responded that he felt nothing out of order had been said during the weekly Question Time debate, in which Collins was quizzing Ardern. "I'm asking the member to make sure that if he has a point of order, it is a fresh

"Fresh and different point of order, Mr. Speaker," the Māori Party co-leader replied.

"When it comes to views of indigenous rights and indigenous peoples, those views must be from indigenous people ... they can't be determined by people who are not indigenous," he said, criticizing a "constant barrage of insults" toward the population.

During that exchange, Waititi's microphone was turned off. "The member's mic is off so he will resume his seat," the Speaker said. In response, the politician began the haka before quickly being ordered to leave.

Māori, who make up about 15% of New Zealand's population, were dispossessed of much of their land during Britain's colonization of the country. Thousands of Māori have protested for civil and social rights in recent years, and have criticized governments for failing to address social and economic inequalities.

Related Article: New Zealand plans national syllabus on Māori and UK colonial history

In February, Ardern's government announced plans for a national syllabus on Māori history. Ardern also appointed the country's first indigenous female foreign minister, Nanaia Mahuta, in November last year.

Search CNN...

US

World

Politics

Business

Opinion

Health

Entertainment

Tech

Style

Travel

Sports

World

FOLLOW CNN

Terms of Use Privacy Policy Do Not Sell My Personal Information AdChoices About Us CNN Store Newsletters Transcripts License Footage CNN Newsource Sitemap

© 2021 Cable News Network. A Warner Media Company. All Rights Reserved.
CNN Sans ™ & © 2016 Cable News Network.